

Shego on the Halo

by Happy1Klnob1

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Summary: The master chief finds something while on a mission. What happens when he brings it along? If it doesn't make sense right away, I'll explain a few things to characters later. *EDIT* Rebooted in Shego and the Spartan!

1. The Structure

The structure

Disclaimer: I forgot to do this when I posted it, silly me, and this is actually my second time with this mistake. So, I'll say this once for the story, and let you get back to it. If you recognize it, chances are that I don't own it. I own these particular variations of such things and this particular plot, but the originals themselves? Nothin'.

For those of you who read HappyWonKinobi's works on tthfanfic.org, you may recognize this story. I've decided to copy my stuff from there to here in order to let more people enjoy them. You'll get the chapters of this one and two others faster from there (click the "Author" button and search HappyWonKinobi and you'll find me faster and more accurately than clicking "Search" and typing in the names of the stories) because I post them there first.

Back to the show!

* * *

><p>"Chief?"<p>

"What is it Cortana?" He asked as he reloaded his DMR.

"I'm detecting an anomaly. It seems to be an old Earth beacon."

The Master Chief paused. "Earth? How is that possible?"

"I don't know. It's ancient, but it works. I'm putting a nav point on it."

A small blue diamond appeared on his Heads Up Display with a number next to it: 200m. Whatever it was, it was human technology and should not have the chance to fall into Covenant hands, so he went straight for it. He had to make a few small detours, but in the end he reached a structure that looked more like a tree than whatever it was. It had a lot of organic material, but it definitely wasn't all vegetation. On the edge of his motion tracker there were a lot of red dots. Enemy units. Too much Covenant to be anything small.

He opened fire upon them and killed them all with little effort and slammed in a fresh clip as he waltzed up to the opening. He pressed himself against the edge and peeked around the edge. All of the occupants, Elite, Jackal, and Grunt, were conferring. He didn't question the opportunity to lob a grenade and take them out, only regretting slightly that one survived as he put it out of it's misery.

He casually walked in, snagging a few plasma grenades. There were a number of turrets lining the hall as he made his way through.

"They're unusually well-armed for such an objective." Cortana remarked. "I mean, wouldn't they have already collected it and left? Why stay when you can just rip it out of the ground and bring it with you?"

The entire structure shifted violently for a few seconds and he got buried under a slight avalanche. When it was over, John remarked casually, "Cortana, stop talking."

"Sorry."

Then he examined the particles from the avalanche. It had only lasted a second, but gave much food for thought. It was Covenant weaponry, through and through. And every single pistol, rifle, and shield was dead.

"What the hell is all this about?" She asked.

He stood, as he had no answers for her, then hesitated, then bent over.

"What are you doing?" She inquired curiously.

He shrugged as he put a shield, a pistol, and a rifle in pouches before continuing. He had no clue what he was doing or why, but this instinct he had had kept him alive and moving throughout the years, making things happen to him that only appear in dreams. Why question it now?

Then he came to a wall that opened itself as he passed it. It stayed open, instead of closing after he passed it, so he doubled back to it and went through it. Cortana thought about how odd it was that this structure, so penetrated by vegetation and ancient beyond belief, still contained enough power to direct them to their objective. And at the same time, she was apprehensive as to how it was directing

them. If she'd had a physical body, she would shiver, and not for lack of heat.

At 50m away, a small, badly aimed explosion knocked him off his feet. It was a Hunter. He chuckled his second frag grenade at it as he rolled away from its second blast, both of which blew harmlessly. He started shooting at it, catching it in the neck a few lucky times, before chucking a plasma grenade at it.

The grenade blew and the Hunter fell on its face, dead.

But human and AI did not relax. Hunters always hunt in pairs, never alone. He entered another door that magically opened itself up for him on his path towards the nav point. At 5m, he heard a loud click-clack sound, and jumped away from it.

It was the other Hunter, badly wounded, but still willing to fight to the last gooey orange drop.

It charged up the Fuel Rod Cannon welded to it's arm. He'd accidentally maneuvered himself into a spot that virtually guaranteed his death. Not like he'd get much choice on going out swinging or not.

Then all three were surprised when it just fizzled out.

All the bells and whistles available in his suit were going off at the same time, trying to rip apart his eardrums, but still clearly allowing the sounds of what sounded like Needler rounds exploding through to his brain. Then he felt his plasma grenades, all but one, pop like a cheap bubble pop effect, then watched the visible crystals in the Hunter's Fuel Rod Gun popping like Needler rounds or a cheap effect in an ancient Earth anime or cartoon. His shields were practically empty when a pneumatic *hiss* came to him, parts of a second before a large piece of metal flew faster than a MAC round through the room, crushing the Hunter like an overglorified bug.

He silently thanked whatever powers that had kept him alive and looked over at what had saved him. He dropped his DMR and Cortana was even speechless, if only for a half-minute (an eternity for an AI such as herself).

"It's a cryostasis chamber. Get close to it." She ordered, intent on scanning the large object.

He walked up to it, and life started to get a little weird. His HUD was completely disrupted, but it was almost like it was still there, in his mind. Like he was as interconnected to his suit at that moment as Cortana was. Ugh, that little burn will be nasty in the morning. How did he miss that? And how long ago did he last service his armor? There are so many things in here that should've been taken care of months ago!

Cortana was directing the suit's sensors at the beacon's location, which was on the cryo chamber. How could he tell that without her telling him?

"It's so ancient that it should've collapsed in on itself a century ago." He could hear her extremely clearly. Far more clearly than he should be able to. "It shouldn't have any power whatsoever, and yet,

there's a power source in this thing that is still going, after who knows how long. In fact, it's getting stronger, like it wants attention. What am I talking about, it's an inanimate object. It doesn't have feelings."

Suddenly, it felt like something hit him, almost physically, but not. He stumbled back a bit and his HUD was back up. It felt like he was almost deaf, for some reason. But he could tell Cortana was getting mad. He backed off a bit more.

"What are you doing?" Her voice wasn't all that level, but seemingly calm at least.

"You're angry at an inanimate object." Sometimes, he has found that stating the obvious is a better idea than saying anything else or saying nothing.

And it seemed to work this time. She calmed down and gave him the order to come back for it after they had dealt with the current objective.

* * *

><p>"Echo 418, comin' in for extraction of unknown technology." She reported to a dispatcher on the ship. Paperwork was so dumb in Parker's opinion, and she had developed a mindnumbing documentation system for these jobs to avoid as much paperwork as possible. Sure, you still had to file the flightplans, and a few descriptions, but her oral documentation covered everything else quite well for her.<p>

She set down the Pelican to let out the marines and the Spartan riding with her to connect chains to the structure. There were places made for it all over the structure's body and the work went quick. Then they climbed aboard the Pelican to watch as the group of four Pelicans tried to pull it from the ground. They failed until a Longsword came to help. Then the bay doors on the Pelicans closed to keep in the atmosphere as they left the planet.

When they arrived back at the ship, they couldn't really get it past the hangar they landed it in. It was a lot bigger than the Longsword, and that thing barely fits in and out of the bay as it is.

In the end, they just converted the bay into a science bay, leaving in many of the Warthogs and Pelicans as well as the Longsword, but basically put up a giant tent around it.

The outside was obviously a bulkhead designed to survive a reentry, maybe even several in quick succession. The dirt surrounding the bottom was tightly packed and held by a root system that baffled a few people as to why it would do that, and the roots themselves contained traces of compounds and radiation that they couldn't replicate or even identify.

The tree had grown around the structure itself, even going so far as to incorporate it as a part of it's very being. Roots replaced wires effectively in places. There were random objects here and there, but at least most of the Covenant had been cleared out. There were a lot more bodies in there that had died of odd wounds or mysterious causes than anyone would've guessed.

And that cryostasis chamber? Well, nobody can figure that out.

* * *

><p>A month after they had discovered the structure's outermost chambers, they tried entering an inner chamber and got blasted for their efforts. Two turrets had popped out of nowhere and blasted them, stunning them with a set of severe stabbing pains to the small intestines that took an hour to straighten out in the sick bay. That afternoon, Cortana was really moody. She kept snapping at people for random things, especially the small stuff. Eventually the captain came up to her and ignored her thinly veiled insult that served for the day's greeting. "Cortana, what's going on ?"<p>

She considered getting really angry at him for a few seconds, then gave up and sighed. "I don't actually know. I've just been really absent-minded. Really."

"And do you know why?"

She struggled for a second, fidgeted, then mumbled out, "I don't know."

"Then tell me what's on your mind and I'll know for you." He said gently. He'd been known to be a good psychiatrist back on Earth, but no one had considered it was a big part of the reason why he was so good at being a leader. He used his talent for being a good psychiatrist (one of the best in fact) as a way to keep his soldiers sharp, capable, and ready to fight the enemy instead of each other. Not to mention sane.

She looked around a bit, like a person looking for a way out, then said, "It's the tech we acquired. Whenever we've done anything invasive, like trying to gain access to many of the rooms or to open the cryo chamber by force, it retaliates. Especially the cryo chamber. The only thing like that we've managed to do without an attack is remove the chamber and put it into cryo 2. And one other thing, sir."

"What is it?"

"The chamber itself, it doesn't have a power source."

"How is that possible? It has plenty of power to-"

"That's just it. The power isn't coming from any sort of pack or generator to keep the bioform alive. The power is being extracted from the bioform. It's barbaric. And the power levels, along with the power itself, just," She struggled for the right words for a moment, "Feels wrong. Like it's not supposed to exist."

He had a very worried look on his face, but Cortana never noticed.

"But no matter how hard I try, I can't bring myself to put out the order to destroy it, even if the only thing that might work is a nuclear blast or a slipspace rupture. It's like there's this need to protect it."

Then her attention was pulled back to reality as a beep interrupted her. "Sir, you're not gonna believe what I just found."

* * *

><p>"There's this keypad at the bottom with an access number. I'd assumed the numbers were just random symbols because of how they were written backwards, but I'm putting them in now to see what happens." As Corporal PT Jock pushed the buttons 7-4-3-4-5, he prayed that it wasn't some sort of practical joke or authorization to self-destruct. It wouldn't be the first time he'd done something like this and blown up.<p>

Well, it would be here in real life.

When compressed air blew out pneumatically he smiled. It hadn't blown up. He went to what could be assumed to be the front and watched in awe as it opened. He never heard Cortana yelling at him that the locator beacon (which was still running) had suddenly turned off and the energy levels were spiking to potentially dangerous levels, rather like a bomb going through the authorization process to blow.

And then it opened.

And then a fist materialized out of the mist millimeters from his face going fast enough.

He flew back, and was later unsure if he'd been out cold before or after he hit the wall.

Then the fist pulled back and a tall form stepped out. It moved too fast for Cortana to get a good look at it until it stopped minutes later, seconds before it just fell over as if dead. It was a human woman, with green flesh and black hair. Then life went on like it was on automatic, nothing getting through to Cortana's mind, until the green-skinned woman woke up again.

* * *

><p>AN: Please read and review. And if things don't make sense to you yet, that's because I haven't gotten far enough in the story to start explaining things. Don't worry about it for now.

2. Chapter 2

Chapter Two

She jumped out and whipped her head around, taking in her surroundings, before running to the guy she'd knocked out and stealing his gun. Then she ran at the door and punched. When it only dented, she got irritated at it and slammed the keypad next to it. She forced the slightly open door open like one might force certain stubborn elevator doors and kept running. There were alarms blaring, but she just ignored them. It didn't take much effort because it was second nature by now.

A guard showed up with an assault rifle. Where was she, the evil version of beyond maximum security? And what's even worse is that the

guy stupidly shouted "Stop!" or "Halt!" or something like he actually expected her to do so. She laughed at him and punched him in the face while he peed his pants.

She made a few turns before greeting another guard with a flying half-filled ammo clip to the face.

Another two turns, another two guards. She shot one in the foot and tackled the other in the gut. She got up fast and noticed a window, which she immediately tried to jump out of.

She just bounced right off of it. 'Must be at least a foot thick!' She thought to herself (in between a few swearwords here and there). She stood up and was about to try again when she noticed what was on the other side of it.

She came up to it calmly and set her elbows on where the window sill was (if it could be called that), face filled with awe. She was only marginally aware of the gathering crowd of guards and guns. All that mattered right now was those beautiful stars.

When someone nudged her, she grabbed, twisted, and punched, all in one fluid motion and without looking away from the view.

When someone else came up close to her, she pointed the stolen pistol at where the head should be. When all they did was stand there she stopped aiming it and set her head on that hand as if the pistol didn't exist. After a minute, she looked at him and said, "You're really tall, you know?"

And then she fainted.

* * *

><p>Nobody moved for a moment. Nobody knew how to come to terms with what just happened, or what to do about it.<p>

Except the green woman.

Snore quietly enough that almost no one heard while everyone else figured out what to do.

An hour later, the captain came to the scene and gently told some marines to bring the wounded to sick bay, and gently lifted the woman from the floor with both hands and brought her to a room in the living quarters, telling Cortana to let her wake up alone, notifying him when it was time. He hadn't raised his voice throughout the entire ordeal, keeping his tone gentle, like he was dealing with his family back home. Once again, people were reminded of the man's ability to take control of the most bewildering or crazy / messed up situation and make it straight again, and when it hit them exactly what happened from beginning to end, they all dropped jaws, with some fainting in awe of their captain, but all filled with pride and joy to be serving with such a great man.

3. Curiosity and just a little bit of death

Curiosity and just a little bit of death

"Come one! I just want to do one more test and then-"

"Hell no! I ain't getting another fucking needle poked into me! I mean ittt-" *stick* *thud*

"I'm sorry, but it was for your own good."

* * *

><p>She sat up, two emotions fighting for control of her throat. Unspeakable rage and near-blinding panic.<p>

Come on girl! Deep breath. You can do this, deep breath. Deep breath. Focus on yourself for now. Don't focus on what has happened, where you are, or, might be. And definitely not on the future!

In through the nose, out through the mouth.

In through the nose and out through the mouth.

In through the nose, out through the mouth.

"Are you alright?"

"HOLYSHIT!" She jumped. And slammed into a wall before the floor. Calm down. Mutter! "Oh, you stupid little girl. It's just a PA." Calm down little woman! Alright, nothing makes sense, I'll admit. Label! It's been a good idea before after all.

As her breathing slowed marginally, the woman opened her emerald green eyes, blinking away the spots before scanning the room; sort of pointing at a few things as she muttered.

"What are you doing?" The woman on the PA asked.

"She jumped, slamming into the wall again. "God dammit! Would you stop that! GOD! I'm trying to calm down here and you're not helping!"

"Sorry." The answer was a little sheepish.

Stop lashing out! Focus. In, out. In, out. In, out. Alright, now focus on yourself. Are you in bad shape? Does everything work properly? Test it and find out. Go through the list she gave you after that ginormous brain surgery last year.

Can you flex your fingers? Thumb, index, middle, ring, pinkies; Check, both counts for all 5.

Toes? Yep, I can feel them.

Stand. ... Well, I can stand, well lean against the wall anyways. Can I keep my balance while standing? She leaned forward, then back, still hyperventilating a bit. Nope. Not yet anyways. Can I slide down slowly? Yep. Ok, leg bones... All lower leg bones intact. Kneecaps? Check.

Femurs? So far so good. Not that it'll do any good if I can't keep my balance just yet.

Feet? She murmured appreciatively. In good shoes.

Hands? Nothing too bad. Mostly just bruises on the knuckles.

Neck? Mm-hmmm. No vasculitis. That's good.

Head? Oh, damn! DAMN! Shouldn'a checked.

Ok, how's my torso (if those bedamned spots will let me make clear judgment). Nothing broken. A bruise where I got sloppy last week. Must've fallen on it.

All in all, not bad. Coulda been a lot worse.

Oh! How did I forget my eyesight?

She reopened her eyes, properly and for more than a few seconds this time.

Now, that little plank in the middle of the wall right there, is that a bed? It's got what looks like a pillow and a blanket.

Risk it? Naw. I like my wall just fine right now. Wait, is it a wall?

Hey! Focus! Stop asking questions! And for God's sake, stop hyperventilating! Sooner you're calm, the sooner you get answers.

After a few minutes, her breathing and heart rates were almost back to normal. She stood up, then ventured away from the wall. "Ok, sooo... this is new." She walked around for a bit, nodding her head slightly. Then she stopped. "I just realized, I forgot to check for spinal damage and-"

"Um, there was a little bruising along your spine and some irreversible damage near your tailbone."

She slipped, starting to panic again, and fell on her arse.

"Oh! Shoot! Sorry, I shouldn't have said a word."

She forced herself to stop backing up. After all, it would only follow her. She took a deep, shaky breath and said, "Just tell me, are you human?"

"Not, really. I-"

"Awwww, great!" She stood up, suddenly not panicky at all. Just annoyed. "Just Effin' Great! Here I am, trapped in a small room without any sort of lifeline to sanity, and acting like a lunatic! Why not just kill me now! Am I not good enough to be shot by humans? No, that would be too much to ask for. The least you could do is take my sanity!"

"Um, who are you talking to?"

"You and God. Mostly God."

"I notice you're not hyperventilating anymore."

"Yeah, I just don't care anymore."

'That sounds more like anger than apathy.' The voice thought to itself. "What were you doing earlier?"

"Is this an interrogation?" She asked flatly.

"No, just curious."

"I was labeling the furniture. Then I was checking for brain damage, which I didn't finish." She stopped talking and angled her head. "You know, you're pretty good at imitating a human female's voice."

"Well, I was based on a human mind--"

"You're an AI?" She plunked to her arse limply, stunned. "I'm doomed. That's all there is for it. I'm either doomed or already dead and in hell."

"Hunh?"

"My personal Hell: Trapped in a hospital room with only an AI for 'company', I'm still green but without the cool parts, without any sort of lifeline to sanity, and I'm gibbering like an idiot with my brothers pestering me without letup." She let her head fall to a side. "Where are my brothers anyway? I mean, I'm obviously in a hospital room and they always know when I'm in a hospital. No matter how badly I'm hurt, I'm not in a hospital five seconds before they find me, those bastards, even when I specifically leave them off the 'next of kin' list."

Before the AI could answer, there was a minor explosion very close by.

From her spot sprawled on the floor, she shouted, "Oh, and I forgot to mention PEOPLE TRYING TO BLOW ME UP!" She stood angrily and ran at the now open door.

She ran through the door, and straight into an Elite.

"What the F--" She began as he swung at her screaming "Demon!"

* * *

><p>The blow connected solidly and the green woman crumpled to the deck, lifeless, as the Elite moved on, completely remorseless. Even more than that, he was joyous to have killed a demon before she'd had the chance to react. He chuckled to himself. When he got home, he'd be praised, and possibly even given his own ship to command.<p>

Cortana didn't have the time to be distracted by the woman's death. A subroutine mourned the loss of all the potential information, but it was rather small. She instead focused on the rest of the Covenant on board. She assigned Fire Teams to each group of Covenant in the hope they'd be able to repel borders, but one by one they were cut down. The groups were darn small and extremely skilled, mostly comprised of Zealot class Elites like the one who'd killed the green woman.

What could be so important that they'd send so many Zealots?

Cortana flicked her electronic gaze to the group in the brig and blinked. They were all dead.

And the woman wasn't in there.

Somewhere in the ship she heard a girly "Hey there." right before a pistol shot. She hadn't seen it happen. She wondered aloud, "What's going on?"

Blind spots started appearing all over the ship. The cameras next to the blind spots showed that the lights went out there as well. The appearances and disappearances of the blind spots were completely unpredictable, but often left behind dead groups of Covenant. Some of the microphones caught the sounds of bullets or even the occasional "Demon!"

Then a blind spot covered the Fire Team Charlie. "Chief! Chief!"

She received only static from him until the blind spot disappeared.

"Cortana! What happened?" John-117 asked.

"You tell me." Cortana shot back.

"The lights cut out, and there was gunfire around the corner. When we got there, the lights
>were back on and there were no living enemy units."<p>

Her attention was pulled to the shots and cries of pain audible on the bridge. "Get to the bridge!" She yelled to the Chief.

"But-"

"Now!" She frantically tried to store herself somewhere else before she was yanked. She failed, but subroutines recorded everything that transpired after that.

* * *

><p>"You know, one of the biggest advantages of being dead is that no one expects you to do this." The green woman rounded the corner and slammed a fist into an invisible Elite, killing it instantly and revealing it. She sidestepped a floating blue line of energy that swung at her and jumped to spin kick the head of the Elite holding the sword. One-shot-kill again.<p>

6 shots from 3 spots rang out, impacting only once on her shoulder. She ignored the burning skin and hit the plasma rifle up, where it was in the perfect position to make the Elite kill himself out of delayed reaction.

Then turret fire slammed her with plasma and she flew out of the bridge and into a wall. An Elite dropped his camo and traipsed up to her confidently. A little too confidently as he was shot in the head by the Master Chief.

Who was then subsequently hit in the head by the cloaked leader holding the turret.

It laughed as it decloaked and pointed its weapon at the woman.

She chuckled and struggled to stand against the wall. "You got a chance to live, pretty boy. And that's to give up, give it back, and leave while I allow it."

The Elite chuckled to himself. "Say goodnight, Demon." He said in almost fluent English. There was a loud click. "Hunh?" He looked at his weapon like it had just grown a self-aware arm.

She grinned. "Was hopin' you'd say that." She pushed off the wall in a tackle to get him off balance, rolled into a standing position, ran after him, and made a grabbing motion above his chest. A sparkle came with her fist as she turned around, whirlwinding first her second fist into him, then the first one carrying the sparkle. On that second hit, a small explosion knocked him off his feet and zapped him across the room.

She went towards him, breathing heavily, and collapsing halfway there. She crawled over to him, picked up the chip in which Cortana was stored, and put it back into the slot saying, "Wake me up when it doesn't hurt." as she passed out, blissfully unaware of all her burns, aches, and pains.

* * *

><p>AN: I've gotta ask if the fight was intelligible to you guys. Please, comment on it, and on every other part of the story you wish. Oh, and names for people, places, and chapters are just as appreciated as any type of comment.

4. Shego wakes up and John gets a hug

Shego wakes up again and John gets a hug

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When she awoke, all clad in new bandages and fresh clothes, the first thing she saw was the ceiling.

The second thing was the Master Chief, out of his armor (which was getting serviced).

She smiled tremblingly and gave him an inescapable hug (not that he tried to get away as this wasn't something he'd been trained for).

After a minute, she let go, showing the tears on her face. "Sorry, it's just that I've had a bit of a hard week, and it's good to see a properly human face."

"That's nice." Cortanna said.

She jumped and pressed herself against him, before pulling away, disgusted with herself. "What am I doing? I'm not a helpless child."

She turned around and saw the glowing purple figure standing only a handsbreadth tall on her bed. "Well, all considered, things could be worse." She sat down on the bed. "Sooooo, you wanna help me fill in the blanks?"

"We were hoping you could."

She smiled. "Well, if I don't know what you know, then I don't know what blanks to fill, so could you give me some information?"

"Information about what?"

"I could do with information about, well about anything really. So, why don't we start with the generalities and eventually move to the specifics?" She tried out a small 'puppy dog' look, just for the heck of it.

Cortanna smiled at it. "Well, the human race has been fighting a war with an enemy that is vastly more powerful and outnumbers us by a five to one ratio."

The green woman looked thoughtful for a moment. "Kinda sounds like your average 'Cowboys Vs. Indians' scenario. Or like something out of Star Wars." She said quietly. Then she returned her attention to Cortanna and said, "Sorry, please continue."

"They're called the Covenant, and they are a group of races that have declared us to be an offense to their deities and so have been trying to exterminate us ever since first contact." She gave the woman a wry smile as she said, "Surprisingly enough, they haven't had too much success."

The woman gave a small laugh and a mirroring smile of wryness. "Never mess with the human race." She said sagely.

"Yes, though due to their technological head on us, it's pretty easy for them to kill us. I have no clue why we haven't been exterminated, other than the Cole Protocol."

"What's that?" She asked.

Mentally, she cursed herself for assuming. She'd forgotten the woman had been in cryosleep for a lot longer than the war had been going on. "The Cole Protocol: A survival protocol created by Admiral Preston Cole. In summary, under no circumstances are civilian or UNSC ships fleeing Covenant assault are to set escape courses towards the UNSC core worlds, and all things with information pertaining to the location of Earth, her colonies, or any defenses are to be wiped or destroyed should the risk of being captured become very likely. That especially includes all constructs and cyborgs, like me and the Master Chief here."

She could see the connection between the special inclusion and keeping alive on the woman's face, but she didn't notice the question until it came out.

"Can you dumb it down a little for me? I'm not a genius, so I won't make the connection unless you spell it out for me."

She was a little taken aback, but tried her best anyway. After a moment, she came up with this. "A construct is typically something digital or holographic to represent something, or a program of some sort, often self-sentient. I'm a construct. Cyborgs are cybernetically enhanced humans."

"Okay, I get that. But, can you give me an example of a construct according to common things in my time?"

She thought a moment. "A digitized storage unit. Today we have holographic storage to retain data and commands in nonphysical consoles."

"Uh, huh." Nodding to show that she had at least rudimentary understanding. "So, when 'dit get created?"

Cortanna was thrown off balance by the question. "Hunh?"

"The Cole Protocol. When was it created?"

"Oh, after several colonies on the outer edge of the known galaxy were taken out by the Covenant. He decided that destruction of any intelligence we had was better than having Earth overrun by Covenant in the process of being wiped out."

"Ah." She smiled in appreciation of the idea. "Smart move."

She yawned suddenly, and then a thought struck her as she moved to put her head on the pillow. She touched her wrist and looked a little disappointed. "Quick question, how long was I out?"

"After you single-handedly saved me?"

"Oh, you were on that chip?" Cortanna nodded. "Wow. I knew whatever it was was important, but not that it was you. Yeah, after that."

"You were unconscious for 2 weeks."

The green skinned woman nodded tiredly. "Yeah, that sounds about right. I gotta take another nap, and once I fall asleep, I'm out like a light." She put an odd smile on her face and repositioned herself on her side. "Wake me up for breakfast, 'k?" She asked sleepily.

Cortanna was saved from answering because Shogo was already asleep.

* * *

><p>When she woke up again, she just sat there, staring at the dark ceiling. She sighed. Nothing made sense, especially her recent past. It's just too damn chaotic. Images mostly, in fact, too much whirlpool of color to figure out. The best she could do at the moment was that an explosion occurred pretty darn close, then there was a few hallways, then Kimmie's worried face. She'd tried to cover it up with a warm smile, but failed pretty miserably. She'd just been too darn oddly exhausted to point it out.<p>

Then cold.

Then nothing.

Then she was running through GJ, or something. Guys with guns? She'd laughed in their faces and knocked their lights out. Simple.

Then that window. Not so simple. It was an amazing view, but wasn't the best thing for her sanity.

On the other, weirder hand, getting the life knocked out of her had been.

Life's funny that way, isn't it?

Yeah, it was.

5. Almost time for breakfast

Almost time for breakfast

Suddenly it was very bright and she groaned. She just wanted to get back to sleep.

She should be so lucky.

Instead, when she turned over to fall back asleep, she fell off the bed. She groaned grumpily when she hit the floor, and gave in, slowly coming to a sitting position.

"Oh, you're awake."

She was surprised by the voice, but she didn't really react. Living with Drakken for four years had taught her to adapt fast if she wanted to stay employed. Or at least alive.

And besides, from what she'd seen so far, the purple girl was like a cross between a few of Kimmie's friends and Drakken, but cuter and actually intelligent.

She yawned and smacked her lips. "I've got a question: do you blow yourself up much?" Time to play the 'Let's guess at the reaction' game! What fun!

"What? No. Why?" Flustered. Definitely flustered. No contest there. Or at least surprised and confused, which is actually the same thing.

She grinned and chuckled. "Thanks, I needed that." Thanks to the complete surprise in Purple's voice, she was awake and much more happy. She stood and stretched. "So, what's up?"

"Um, you told me to wake you up for breakfast."

"Yep. So direct me to food."

"Um..." She was hesitating to keep her inside the room.

Shego smiled at that. "Look, I have listened to, and dealt with, everything any quack doctor or worried relative could throw at me.

And more than that, I'm hungry because I've gone for God knows how long without food. I could really use a cup of coffee and a cheeseburger right about now." When the AI didn't respond, she said, "Capisce?"

There was only one possible thing going through the AI's head: possible ways to continue the conversation and possibly manipulation avenues. Due to the lack of blackmail material and such, there really was only one possibility. Two if you include lying. Not gonna fall for that, though.

The door opened.

"Thank you. To direct me, just make panels along the path light up. And don't just put me in a circle or send me to the wrong place, got that?" She started walking.

If the AI'd had a body, she'd be audibly gulping right now.

All things considered (she'd saved and intimidated an AI, hugged a very large man, interrogated the two of them while being interrogated, and just killed a bunch of creatures after suffering a massive head trauma), this was shaping up to be a good day.

* * *

><p>AN: Yeah, I know, it's so short. But, it's better than nothing at times, and I don't want to get too far ahead before I have it posted properly on tthfanfic . org.

So I guess you'll just have to wait. *Evil Snicker*

6. Pain makes conversation a little hard

Pain makes conversation a little difficult, right?

"So this is it, hunh?" the green woman whistled appreciatively. The mess hall in question was definitely whistle-worthy. After all, it had to be big enough to house and feed the entire ship's complement at mealtimes. She leaned against the wall near the door, watching for a minute, then expertly making her way over to the lunch lines, which were just starting up for the upcoming meal. She piled a plate with food, then made her way over to a small secluded corner and sat on the floor, happily eating her food. And then a girl in pink armor came up to her and shouted "WAKE UP!" right in her ear before letting her shotgun go off in her ear.

* * *

><p>Shego sat up with a small yell of surprise. She took a moment to calm down, slowing her breath until she had calmed down enough to figure out what the heck was going on. When the panic had left, taking the adrenaline with it, her head started to hurt, and she put her hand to it. Instead of hair, she felt cloth. Odd. She pressed, and it felt slightly squishy. Blood on the bandage, but it hasn't dried yet, and yet the wound has healed down to a slight bruising, otherwise it would hurt more. Curiouser and curiouser. Especially since her skin was a pale peach. It should be a deep green, like it had been for the past, I don't know, twenty-five years? Completely

weird.<p>

A female voice spoke in her head. "She's awake."

She jumped. Not much, but she did. She'd just had the weirdest dream ever, and right now, reality wasn't quite conforming to certain known rules. With her luck, this was the dream and the other side was reality, which would suuuuck.

She shook her head, trying to clear the foggiess from her thoughts and vision, giving up after a few minutes. She sighed and lowered herself onto the bed again.

Some time passed and the door to her room opened, letting in the sounds of people walking by, and a few walking in. She knew what was about to happen. "I know what you're probably here about, so, why don't we just skip to the part where we find out what we know?" She tried to keep the pain out of her voice, but wasn't completely successful.

"What's your name?" A kind voice asked. From the voice, he's probably white, and with a family. Possibly the local psychologist, though it didn't make as much sense as a leader or specially chosen liaison would.

"I, I go by Shego." She said. "I haven't exactly, used my name in a while."

"You've forgotten your own name?" He asked, incredulous.

"Sort of. The pain isn't exactly helping my memory." She grunted again as the pain spiked. No discernible pattern to it yet. "Where am I?"

"You're in the medical bay of the UNSC Defiant Vengeance." The kind voice said. "I'm Captain Parker Michaelson." That would make sense.

She quirked her mouth into a small smile. "Nice names."

"I always thought so." Parker said. "Though, something's been bothering me. Weren't you green an hour ago?"

"That, I can't tell you, as I didn't see. I'm supposed to be green, but I'm not for some reason." Don't even think about thinking it. Soon as you do, it'll come rushing right back. "It's never happened to me before."

"The lack of green?"

She nodded. "So, who's guarding you?"

"It's only you and me in here." He said.

She smirked. "Liar." She said. She didn't put much heat into her voice. "One, I'm not an idiot. If I were you, or your head of security, I would insist upon it. After said prisoner took out 4 guards in quick succession without much effort, even I would be a little cautious."

"She's good." A gruff male voice whispered. Much deeper, and with a rumble of authority in it. Therefore, black and probably a squadron leader of some sort.

"It was actually 5 marines." Parker said, gently correcting her amount.

She raised her eyebrows. "Marines?" She paused, assumed he'd nodded, and said, "Wow." She nodded to herself and forced herself back on topic. "Two, while I couldn't see, I could hear, and I heard a few too many steps to be just one person, even including the group walking just outside the door. And besides, I'm betting that the tall guy's curious about me." 'Hell, I'm curious about me!' she thought to herself.

"So is Cortana, the ship's AI."

"So that purple figure that I talked to, that wasn't just a hallucination or a dream."

"How'd you know she was purple?"

She raised her eyebrows. "So, I did imagine her?"

"Well," the female voice from earlier said. "You didn't imagine telling me about your brothers before getting hit on the head, hard."

"So, were you on that chip that I stuck into that pole?"

"Yes. How'd you know?"

"It, it was in my dream." Shego said it hesitantly. "We talked about a lot of things in my dream."

"Like what?"

"Like how I've been unconscious for 2 weeks, though that's probably wrong if I still have a bandage on my head. Then there's the Cole Protocol, how it was made to keep the Covenant away from Earth, and bastions of the human race. The definitions of the terms 'Construct' and 'Cyborg'. Though, one thing about that I don't- never mind."

"What is it?" Cortana asked.

"I was going to say that I don't get why cyborgs would get priority with the constructs, but I figured it out. Being enhanced, a cyborg will be a much more capable soldier, and especially useful in propaganda and the attempts to win the war. The people need their idols. They need their hope. Without hope, we'll lose without a fight." 'There's no pain.' She marveled at it for the split second that she had pain-free before pain came rushing back to her, and she sucked in a huge breath.

"Her adrenaline levels are spiking." Cortana said.

"Yeah, no shit!" Shego yelled at her, gritting her teeth from the pain.

And suddenly, the world went white, and Shego knew no more.

* * *

><p>AN: I hope you like the different direction I decided to take it. Please tell me what you think of it. Also, if you think of a better chapter name, I'm probably open to it.

7. Chapter the Seventh: Making Friends

****Chapter the Seventh: Making Friends****

* * *

><p>Awareness came in a rush of pain and information.<p>

My name was Allyson Tex, AKA Shego. I was a famous thief who'd joined her archenemy-turned-friend (even though it was I who turned) in the fight to keep humanity around.

Old lessons boiled to the forefront of my mind, information tried to settle into place but only made a bigger mess of than there'd been before, and lives and lies somehow cooperated to give me a purpose: "Survive. Survive until you can rescue Church."

She opened her eyes, her marvelous green eyes, and her mind quieted.

She was human, through and through.

I smirked, which soon grew to be a full-on face-splitting grin. The Covenant would never know what the hell hit them.

I sat up, swung my feet over the edge, and walked over to a mirror. I hummed a tune as I examined myself. I looked nice in the uniform they'd provided me with. My waist-length green-black hair was tied into a ponytail and covered by a small hat. I twisted, and smiled. The uniform was felt good, and allowed for a free range of movement. There wasn't much decorating the grey civilian uniform, which was fine with me. I knew I'd have to prove myself if I wanted anything bigger than a pistol, and that was just fine with me too.

I looked at the small table next to the bed. On it was a service pistol for civilian use when on a military boat. I went over and hefted it. It felt right in my hand. I pulled back on the slide, testing the gun for any sort of damage, dirt, or dangerous imperfections. I then ejected the magazine and pushed out the bullets, counting them. When I finished, I smiled, and began putting them back in. 12 bullets a clip. Good. Better than only 6 or 9.

I put the mag back in the gun, clicked on the safety, and slid it into the pocket that was probably designed for the weapon. Then I went over to the door and pressed the top button of the keypad next to it, assuming correctly that that was how to open it, and left the room, simply exploring the ship.

It was fun to watch the marines going about the ship, blending in like I was just another face in the crowd. It'd been years since I'd been able to do that so easily, and it felt wonderful.

I heaved a sigh. If only Church was here.

A woman paused, and went over to her. "Are you okay?" She asked, worried at the melancholy on my face.

I put on a brave face and said, "Yeah, just missing my friend." I read the name tag. "So how's your day been miss Randson?"

She smiled. "It's been fine."

My stomach growled loudly, startling us both. I looked right in her eyes, serious look etched onto my face as if it'd been made of granite and said in a deadpan tone, "I just realized, I'm hungry enough to eat an entire Spartan."

She tried. She really tried. But the image of me, some 5'8" woman with a tiny waist, eating a 6'10" hunk of meat surrounded by metal in one go was obviously too much. She laughed and I smiled.

When she'd stopped laughing quite so hard, she wiped the tears off her face and said, "Let's go to the mess hall."

I nodded, neglecting to mention that I didn't know where it was from here.

I followed her to the mess hall and into the lines, grabbed some food, and went to a table where a few others were waiting. She'd stared at my plate after I'd piled it with food until it was bigger than hers, and she was a big eater. I'd smiled and shrugged.

When we were 5 feet away, one of the guys in the group, probably her unit, popped his head up and grinned. "Hey Rand. You brought a friend for tonight?"

She scoffed, but her smile held easily. She was obviously used to his innuendos. "Nope. I just took pity on her." She sat down opposite him and I sat next to her.

"Well then, pretty lady." I looked at the speaker's tag. It read "Floyd". "Have you heard? The Rigs is crazy."

I shook my head. "Actually, I hadn't heard that particular rumor. Is it true?" I smiled at him, just for the heck of it, and because the fourth person at our section of the table had a tag reading "Rigs".

"Hell yes it's true." Rigs said, smiling the Devil's own grin. "But I bet you haven't heard the latest Shego rumor."

I raised my eyebrows. There was an entire set of rumors about my name? Really? I pretended to think and answered honestly. "Nope, don't think so."

"Well, here's how I heard it." He came in close, and whispered to us, "I heard that she killed over 10 Zealot-class Elites by herself in less than a day."

"Oh, bullshit!" That was the first guy, the innuendo guy. I couldn't quite read his tag. "There is no way someone would be able to kill

that many that fast. Maybe if she had a tank and they all sat still." He said scornfully.

"No, I'm serious about this TJ!" Rigs sounded a little offended at his friend's off-handed dismissal. "She really did!"

"Yeah, and she can zap a field of grunts with her eyes and sprout plasma out her ass." Floyd said sarcastically. I laughed at that. "Not even a so-called Spartan can kill itwo/i Zealot-class Elites by themselves Rigs. Just let it go."

I headed off the potentially violent argument with "Well, she seems to be quite the William Wallace kind of person, and I've only heard two rumors about her so far."

They looked at me and the looks on their faces battled between confusion and incredulity. I could guess just from that. They didn't know who William Wallace was. That was the confusion.

"How can you not know who Shego is?" Rand asked.

I shrugged apologetically and said, "I was in cryosleep for a long time, so sue me."

"How long, exactly?" Rand asked.

"Too damn long." I said honestly. "That's why I'm so hungry today." All five of us looked down at my plate, and I was a little surprised. I had decimated half my plate when I wasn't looking.

"Damn." Rand exclaimed. My sentiments exactly. She looked at me and asked, "Where'd you pack all that, your damn leg?"

I smiled and took a moment to examine them closely before I answered. They were a close knit group. They've gone through some tough fights, but they love each other in that "Semper Fidelis" way that most soldiers get, especially with those from their units. Well, scratch that. It wasn't simply Semper Fi, it was also like they were a family, one that they had made themselves with each other.

"I honestly have no idea. Maybe I have a higher metabolism than I should." I shrugged. I thought about my next move. A lightbulb flashed over my head, and I smiled. "I just realized something. Nobody has asked me my name, and it isn't on my uniform."

"So what's your name?" TJ asked me the simple question like he was trying to ask me out on a date that night.

I rolled my eyes at the innuendo in his voice and said, "My name is Allyson 'Tex' Texas, and I'm already spoken for."

If TJ was surprised by this, he didn't show it. "If you're spoken for, then where's the lucky guy?"

I smiled and waited for him to begin drinking before saying, "Who says it's not some 'lucky girl'?" I grinned when he spit out his drink, coughing.

"I'm joking." I assured him. "Truth to tell, I don't know. Probably still in cryosleep somewhere." My smile faded a little as I thought

about him, not knowing where he is. It would be unlikely for him to be on the ship, otherwise, we'd've woken up together, when it was safe. I shook my head of such melancholy thoughts and went back to the conversation. "So, what else is there to be heard about this 'Shego' person?"

The cheer returned to their faces and they began gossiping with me like I was an old friend. The things I learned in the next hour were astonishing. Apparently, I had been a Spartan-I, a Spartan-II, iand/i a Spartan-III (though I don't think the third exists yet), as well as an impossibly talented ONI agent (which is like their version of the CIA); that I have multicolored skin that prefers an acid green color; that I once took out an entire CCS-Class Covenant Heavy Battle Cruiser all by myself; that I went toe-to-toe with 3 Spartan-I's and lived; and that I also once took out 5 Hunters by myself all at once.

Oh, and that I once killed an Elite by ripping out his spine, which I then used to kill 10 grunts.

By reading between the lines, I could tell that the Spartan-I project was hushed up and disavowed, that many marines, mostly in the Orbital Drop Shock Trooper squadrons, have a deep-seated dislike of Spartans, and that the iidea/i of me is even scarier than the idea of facing 2 Spartans-II's in single unarmed combat to some people.

When they subtly froze, I noticed, and turned around. Behind me was a taller white man with a kind face and a gray uniform decorated with a few things, including a medal that looked suspiciously homemade. I plastered a polite smile on my face and took a guess. "May I help you captain?"

I saw the surprise in his eyes and inwardly applauded the man for not letting it show on his face. "Can we speak in private?"

I nodded and said, "Yes sir. May I clear my place at the table first?" I motioned towards my now-empty plate to let him know what I was talking about.

He nodded, and I stood. I turned back to the group and said my goodbyes, brought my plate over to where the dirty plates go for washing, and went to follow the captain.

We walked in silence for awhile before he cleared his throat. "So, I saw that you were having a good time with those marines."

I nodded. "Yep. I never knew that so many different rumors about me existed. I mean, did you know that I once killed a Wraith tank by just walking up and glaring at it?"

He shook his head at the information, clearly just as amazed as me. "I did not know that." After a moment, he said, "Cortana didn't want to leave until you'd woken up, but the Master Chief took her out to explore an old ruin."

"Uh-huh." I nodded slowly. "Well..." I paused, thinking this through. "How bad has she been?"

He looked at me, eyebrow raised.

"Tell me. How off center has she been recently, starting from when I first showed up?"

He thought back, and said, "Bad."

I grimaced. "Bad.", in his tone of voice, means "Almost to the point of insanity, but that cliff is nowhere in sight." "That's bad." I shrugged. "Well, I know a few ways we can bring her closer to her previous balance."

"How?" He asked as we took a turn into a conference room.

"Simple. Enlist me."

He looked at me like I was the craziest thing he'd ever seen.

"If she knows that I can take care of myself, and I prove it to her directly, it should take the edge off and let her figure out how to recenter herself. With that help, she might be able to do her job again. Properly, at least."

He thought that over. After a few minutes he said, "Well, it appears that I don't have much of a choice." He sat down at the table, pulled a small digital/holographic pad (probably containing information) from a pocket, and slid it across the table towards me. I raised my eyebrow at him a little, picked it up, and read as my eyebrows reached for the sky.

Shego

Height: 5'8" or 172.72 cm

Weight: 110 lbs or 49.896 kg

Rank: ONI: Special Agent; UNSC: Master Chief Petty Officer; Freelancer

Serial Number: SH3G0-07TEX

Pelican callsign: Echo318

Awards: Classified

Battles and missions of note: Classified.

Notes: Shego has the power to commandeer any UNSC ship that she sees fit to use and if she gives you an order, no matter how outrageous it may be, every member of UNSC personel are to follow it.

The picture next to the name was me, but green like I had been. I looked up at him incredulously. "Are you fuckin' kidding me?"

He shook his head seriously.

The whole picture (me, standing there, holding my own heavily redacted file, him, shaking his head seriously in that particular way), it was almost too much. I had to work to keep from bursting out laughing. As it was, a small chortle came out anyway. I swallowed it, and said, "Well, that doesn't mean that I can't enlist."

He was close to laughing too, especially from the way he lifted his eyebrows so comically. Well, it was probably more evident from the way his neck went thick, but it could have been his eyebrows.

I decided to elaborate for his convenience. "I introduced myself to that group as Allyson Tex, so if I 'enlist' as Allyson Tex, then I'll still be able to stick around, and it will be legal for me to shoot a gun without tipping my, our, hand. 'Shego' is a wild card, an ace in the hole, and if nobody knows you have it, then it will surprise everyone, probably ourselves included, when we pull it out." I paused, taking a deep breath to keep my laughter at bay, and asked him a question. "Did she leave a subroutine to record everything that's happening?"

He nodded. He probably doesn't trust himself to speak at the moment.

"Well, all we need now is a skull that says 'Jimmy wuz here.'"

That was all it took. Within seconds, the two humans in the room were struggling to keep on their feet as they laughed their brains out. When Cortana showed up, asking, almost nonchalantly how things were going, they just laughed harder.

8. Chapter 8

It took us a while, but eventually Parker and I calmed down enough to tell Cortana what had happened. I regaled them all with tales of what 'Shego' had done, and then asked Cortana about my idea for enlisting.

Since I had suggested that we put Cortana into a holoprojector and that we all sit down while I talked, we were all sitting and waiting as I watched Cortana think it over. Parker had passed me a note saying that she was taking this a lot calmer than some families had over the decision to enlist, his included. It also said that she was a lot calmer than she had been before the mission.

Slowly, Cortana nodded. "It's doable." She said.

I smiled. "How hard will it be to create the paperwork?"

She shrugged. "Not very. But it'll probably be harder to get the main UNSC personnel database to accept it."

I shrugged. "It's not gonna be that hard. Slipspace is faster than any intergalactic communications you have, right?"

Cortana nodded.

"So that means that any updates to the database due to recruitment happening on a more distant world would have to be brought in by courier."

Cortana nodded again. She looked unsure of where I was going.

"Well, since it has to be done by courier, and the iDefiant Vengeance/i is a ship doing a search, rather than specific missions, it will probably have to make pit stops every so often for resupply,

then you could, theoretically, pick up stowaways and spontaneous recruits as you go along, since you're the most recent UNSC ship to visit. There's gotta be precedent of that somewhere in the last 3 hundred years, since it's about 2552." I'd heard a few bits of history from my friends, so I knew the date at least.

Cortana thought for a moment, then said, "There is. In fact, there are several instances where this happened, though there's usually a recruitment office and a training ground on-site near dry-dock."

I smiled. "Good to know. Let's get started."

* * *

><p>I smiled. There she was, shooting in the gun range, looking as sexy as I'd ever seen her.<p>

You know, this is part of my problem. I've been separated from my girlfriend for too long, and I tend to get really stalker-ish when I've been away for too long.

Of course, I also get a bit of a hero complex when I'm away too long.

... WHO THE HELL AM I KIDDING?! I HAVE A HERO COMPLEX EVERY SINGLE DAY! (When I'm not being annoyed by those idiots, that is.)

And besides, if I'm going to be honest with myself, my stalking and my complex aren't really problems, and we tend to get a little distracted in order to keep me from getting too overbearing.

I noticed a presence a short ways away by cyberspace. I look over and smile.

"Hello Cortana." I say. Since I'm in cyberspace, I'm obviously not using sound, which also allows me to keep my anonymity. Of course, there's also the annoying side-effect of not knowing my own gender.

"Who are you?" She asked me.

I paused for a few nanocycles, thinking for the best way to say it. "Ghost. I'm everywhere, and nowhere. Or so the rumor goes."

She raised a nonexistent eyebrow. "Would that be the same rumors as Shego's?"

I raised my own in response. "Well, that depends."

"On what?"

"Well, on many things. Right now though, it depends on what you've heard."

"That depends on what you want."

I gave the equivalent of a shrug. "I want many things. Until I can show up properly though, I can't have most of those. I have to content myself with keeping her safe using any means necessary out of those available."

She was probably choosing which thread to pursue first. "What means do you have."

To badly quote a favorite movie, 'You have chosen, wisely.' "A lot. Most of ONI, and the classification I gave to her as 'Shego'."

"You gave it to her?" If she'd had a body, both eyebrows would be up. And if I'd had a body, I would have answered in detail. Unfortunately, a notification popped up on a certain 'Project Freelancer'.

"Goddammit." I muttered. I aimed my perception back at Cortana. "Sorry, but I gotta go. Tell me how it turns out, okay?"

And with that, I vanished from her perception.

I checked on the device I'd ordered built some time ago to alert me to certain changes in the universe. Things like this instance, where a certain, unidentified (or at least unlabeled) energy signature popped up out of nowhere while a certain member of a certain team was asleep. This intrigued me a bit, as I've only known a few individuals capable of doing this. Me, Tex, O'Mally, ... actually that's it. Just me, Tex, and O'Mally.

I set up cyberflags to track the being created by the energy signature. I was pretty sure of what it was, and what it looked like, but there was only one way to be sure.

I brought my presence over to a terminal next to the being, and was surprised when the being pulled off the helmet. Honestly? I was expecting a guy.

She turned my way and smiled. "Hey. It's been awhile, hasn't it Ghost?"

* * *

><p>Bang!<p>

I cocked my head and looked. Last bullet through the target. I smiled. I put down my pistol and pressed the button to bring the target up to me. Two full clips of my twelve-bullet pistol into one target in quick succession.

One hole.

It's verifiable that I hit perfectly too. If you ask Cortana to look at it, You'll see that she probably tracked the bullets to the same spot every time.

I wrote "Shego" on the top. It'll be a good bit of gossip to spread.

I put up another target and sent it downrange. Then I ejected the empty clip, slammed in a fresh one, then repeated the process, but with slightly less accuracy. This one I labeled "Allyson Texas".

I looked at the two targets and smiled, pleased with my work.

"Is there a reason you used two targets?" The Master Chief asked.

I nodded. "Yep. See, now we have an official record of how good 'Shego' is in the shooting range. Now, since I want to be myself most of the time instead of some feared/revered legend known as 'Shego', I don't want the results to be the same for 'Allyson'. It'll go on record that, while I'm good, I'm no Shego." I gave him an ironic smile. "So, what's next on the certifications list?"

Cortana spoke up. "Well, what's your favorite weapon?"

"Out of what selection?" I asked.

She pulled up a list of weapons, complete with pictures. There was a powerful sniper's rifle (four bullet clip, huge range, great penetration. Unfortunately it won't go through Hunter armor or those portable shields Jackals use, but you can't have everything), an assault machine gun (CO2 propelled bullets (wondered when they'd get smart), fully automatic firing action, 60 bullet clip), submachine guns (200 bullet clips, but much smaller bullets, and they tend to get inaccurate from all the vibration jackin' through your hand(s)), a battle rifle (15 bullet clip, 3-shots from one pull of the trigger, fairly accurate), a DMR (a normal rifle of 15 bullet clip, single bullet per trigger pull, practically a sniper rifle, but not as long ranged and unscoped), a shotgun (powerful, 6 shells a load), and a rocket launcher (basically a large, reloadable tube filled with hand-length 4-inch slugs of bona fide tank-killer).

I thought about it for a few minutes. "I guess I'll have to try them all." I looked at him. "In sequence, of course. Don't want any enterprising minds to think I've got some sort of special favor, now do we?" Assuming they agreed with me I continued, "For now, let's just go with general classification. Pistol and all three rifles. When I have Cortana's satisfaction, then I'll leave and wait a few days before I go for certification on heavier weapons." I noted the white 117 painted on his shoulder. I decided to call him 117 on occasion.

Parker nodded and went over to the table nearby. I hadn't noticed it before (bad girl for not noticing!), but it contained all the weapons Cortana had shown me. Part of the reason I'd decided on doing it in steps, other than that that's how people did it when they weren't 'cheating', was that I don't think that they'd just hand me a rocket launcher to practice with, especially given their power, their limiting ammo size, and the fact that we're on a ship in the middle of space. Even if everyone didn't hear the blasts, there's still the fear in my mind that I'd accidentally hit the engines or life support systems or something.

In other words, I'm a little scared of having so much firepower in my hands in the middle of enemy territory (and without atmosphere surrounding the ship, either!).

* * *

><p>An hour later, I was the proud owner of a certification in use of the three basic rifles used in combat. And even better, I had my own set of combat armor! I was officially not a civvie anymore!<p>

After giving me my combat uniform (Cortana said they'd put in an

order for my dress blues when they got to a UNSC-friendly planet with appropriate facilities), they gave me free time. So I did what came naturally to me.

First of which, and technically last of which, was go and eat. My tummy was rumbling and, honestly, I'm kinda surprised I left the mess hall before I'd had enough to last me the entire week. I'm glad I left some for the other troopers.

After that I decided to work out for awhile, and then when that got boring I went over to a computer and searched through the database, just collecting general facts. I don't know when I fell asleep, but I must have at some point because one minute I'm reading about the Spartan-II Project (sanitized for public consumption, of course), the next I'm staring at the bottom of someone's boots. When I heard the groaning, I connected that with my position, the boot's position, and the position of the floor, and realized that I'd decked Rand. I jumped to my feet and pulled her to her feet, straightening her look as I apologized for slamming her in my sleep. She just looked at me surprised and laughed. "If that's how good you punch in your sleep, then I don't wanna see what you do to someone who pissed you off when you're awake!"

After a moment, her good mood was infectious, and I gave her a smile. Then I told her about my afternoon in the gun range. "I'm thinking about getting a certification in heavy weapons and armor, because as everyone knows, that's where the power lies, with the rocket launchers and the tanks." I told her offhandedly.

She raised her eyebrows before looking me up and down. "Are you sure?"

I gave her an odd look. "Yeah, why?" I asked slowly.

"'Cause you don't look like a heavy weaps person." She said uncertainly.

I raised an eyebrow. "And what's a heavy weaps person look like?"

She pretended to think as she said, "Tall, bulky, enough muscle to carry around those big ol' weapons without topplin' over." A slight accent flavored her words. Kinda reminds me of the Bronx, but slightly slower, surer.

"Well, I think that I'll blow up that bridge when I cross it."

She laughed at that joke, and then yawned one of the biggest yawns I've ever seen. I raised my eyebrows and made an executive decision. "I think it's time for you to go to bed. Where's your bunk?"

We made our slow way over to the women's barracks (slowed further by the fact that I was getting tired too), and by the time we made it to a destination, we didn't really care as long as there were no men to make rude comments so that we could actually sleep. We loped on over to the closest bed, and fell asleep in our clothes without a blanket.

* * *

><p>She put her helmet back on, making sure the seals lined up.<p>

"Are you sure about this?"

She angled her face towards me. While the faceplate was polarized, I could imagine the raised eyebrow she was throwing at me. "Of course I'm sure Ghosty Boy."

I gave a shrug. "Well, if you're sure."

She nodded. "Positive."

"You know, you're not quite what I expected."

She gave what I thought was a commiserating nod. "I was expecting myself to make no sense whatsoever. Instead, I'm a complete flip." She snapped a fresh clip into her SMG, slid it into its holster, slid herself into the cockpit of the Longsword, and checked with me one last time about the destination. Then she started up the jet, slid out the bay door that I opened, and left.

"You know," I said to empty air. "I have this odd urge to say 'Elvis has left the building'. Do you know why?"

And then I left.

9. A raid and Learning about Freelancer

The first thing I was aware of was the fact that I wasn't alone. I was in bed, cuddled up to a warm body, who was incidentally cuddling with me.

The next thing I knew, I was opening my eyes just in time to watch as Rand's eyes open. We looked at each other in shock for what seemed like an eternity, and then I cleared my throat. We blinked, unsure of what to do, so I cleared my throat again and opened my mouth.

"Don't say anything." She said threateningly.

I raised my eyebrows.

"Don't say it!"

I closed my mouth. I'm pretty sure my amusement was clear on my face, though it's only partly because of her scoff.

"I'm getting up." She said.

"That's fine with me." I said. I tried, but I couldn't quite wipe the grin off my face.

"Shut up!" She yelled right before a towel hit me in the face. Apparently she saw my face.

"I wasn't going to say a thing." I said, stretching. I sat up, listening to the shower as it started up. I thought about life for a moment, and the sort of rumors this was going to spring on us. We didn't sleep together. That much is obvious to me. But, the important

thing was how to deal with it.

A thought struck me and I glanced over into the bathroom. What I saw raised an eyebrow. Lace?

Then another thought struck me that made me snigger. 'I'm such a perv.'

Which is pretty far from the truth where it doesn't concern Church.

The smile on my face faded a bit. Nothing serious, just a case of missing boyfriend.

Okay, it's serious. You know how I know? It took Rand slapping me in the face with her wet towel after she'd already gotten dressed.

I shook my head, trying to focus. "Sorry. Gotta get my mind out of the gutter." I pushed against my back until I heard a popping sound and then stood up. I looked at Rand and, ignoring the questioning look on her face, I lead the way out of the room. After a few tense seconds, I decided to break the ice. "So how was your shower?"

She shrugged. "It was okay." She was tense. You wouldn't know it if you didn't know her. Which begs the question, how did I know she was tense?

"How 'bout this: how are you?"

She looked at me oddly. "I'm fine. How 'bout you?"

I shrugged like she had earlier. "Same, mostly."

Suddenly, our stomachs decided to protest the lack of food. Loudly. In unison. I looked at her. She looked at me. We tried, but we ended up laughing anyway.

I smiled at her. "Let's go grab some grub, shall we?"

She smirked at me. "Well, if you feel up to it."

I matched her smirk for smirk. "Of course."

A few feet later, with the cafeteria door in sight, there was a small explosion and suddenly, the floor wasn't the floor. It was the wall.

And because we were oh so conveniently standing on the middle of the wall, gravity had a slight bone to pick with us. Understandable, but not appreciated.

I scoffed as I pushed myself up. "Well, getting beat up by a wall isn't on my list of favorite things anymore."

I knelt down to grab Rand, who muttered almost too quietly for me to hear, "Almost wish I were Spider-Man."

I chuckled. Then I looked at the wall-that-was-the-floor. "Damn. Now I can't get my coffee." Then I looked at Rand, who was looking at me strangely. "What?"

"The floor is the wall, and you're moaning about coffee?" She asked, deadpan.

I nodded. "Well yeah! I don't need to worry about any straight up rumors from your group, and all the foodstuffs in the mess are gonna be messed up until after this is straightened out. And that's ignoring the pink elephant in the room known as the fairly obvious problems caused by the change in gravity." I looked over at the mess and cocked my head to the side. I moved over to it and put my hand through it after kneeling next to it. What I felt confirmed what I saw. Gravity is different in different sections. Those in the mess hall were dancing on the ceiling, so to speak. I stood back up and looked at Rand. "Where's the Gravity Drive?"

She looked surprised at the question. "I don't know!"

I raised an eyebrow. "You don't know what the layout of your own assignment?"

"Well, how was I to know that I'd need to know about the Gravity Drive?! I'm not an engineer!" She yelled. "And those that do go there already know where it is!"

"What if someone hijacks this boat?" I shot back calmly. "Or if you need to infiltrate a ship of similar or identical build because of revolutionary or Covenant action? Knowing your own ship can be the thing that keeps you and your friends and family alive. Sometimes the only thing." I finished my little speech softly, memories of failures coming to the fore.

It made an impact on her, and she lowered her head, blushing.

I lifted her head to look into her eyes. "Just focus on what we need to do for now and be ashamed later. I'll help you fill in the blanks after this, okay?" I spoke softly, ignoring the fact that every second I spent on this was one second less to deal with the crisis. I needed to do this, because her professionalism and ability in combat might be worth exactly jack-shit in something like this, and I needed her confident until there was no need for 'strength'.

After a moment, she nodded and fell in behind me as I began our trek to find the Gravity Drive and someone to fix it, Rand giving us direction to the general area of the engineering 'sector'.

After slamming into different walls a few times (floor, ceiling, floor, wall, opposite wall and almost through a door), I decided to get smart. I pulled out my service pistol and ejected the magazine. Ignoring Rand's look, I pulled out a few bullets and tossed them. When they changed direction, that's when I knew the gravity changed. After a couple more changes, I was out of bullets, but at least we were there.

There was a good amount of carnage all around the engineering area. A few dead bodies, and a larger number of injured scattered along all the walls. We used those to figure out where the gravity shifted, and to replenish my bullets, as we walked along.

Suddenly, I got the feeling that I really needed to go into one of the doors, so I did, halfway ignoring Rand as I went. Before I hit a

wall or any equipment, I hit the floor, sliding a little. The floor as in, 'Floor' floor. I wandered a bit in the room before finding a sparking piece of equipment and an injured man in a yellow civilian suit. I gently shook him awake. "Are you an engineer that works with the Gravity Drive?"

He nodded.

"Good. Since you're in absolutely no shape to fix it, I'm gonna need you to tell me what to do."

He and Rand, who'd obviously followed me in, snorted in near unison. "You can't think you can actually fix it." He said incredulously.

I shook my head. "Nope. Just put a patch on it until we can get replacement parts. And if you think it can't be done, then I'll just tinker with it until I either get what I want from it or it kills me with an electrical explosion." I stood and went over there, fully intending to do as I said I would, and stopped when he sighed.

"Alright, fine. Get me up and I'll help you."

I nodded, and with Rand's help, I got him standing.

* * *

><p>I watched with pride as my girlfriend managed to peacefully threaten the mechanic into helping her fix the Gravity Drive. As weird as I am, I could watch her work while Cortana couldn't. I'm not entirely sure why I could watch her, but I was sure why Cortana couldn't. Not because of my interference, that's for sure. I was just an observer, watching, and nudging here and there in a few places. Not much, but a little.

Of course, almost getting my girlfriend, her new friend - and possible teammates -, and some of the best soldiers to ever enter the UNSC Navy killed is not in my plans. _That_ particular plot twist was someone else. I couldn't tell which person or side because, for some odd reason, I couldn't hack into their ship. Nor could I see it.

...

I really need to spend time with my girlfriend when she knows I'm actually there. I actually said "Nor" in a sentence, correctly, and as the beginning to a sentence, too!

Unfortunately, I don't know how to get laid.

* * *

><p>I gave a section of pipe one last twist and suddenly, gravity returned to Earth normal, probably throughout the ship if the thuds and grunts were anything to go by. I cocked my head at the piece of technology before me, silently appraising it. Well built, largely intact, and seems to be running properly. Sure it could be about to blow on me, but I didn't really think so. I nodded at it, then looked over at where Rand was holding up the engineer. "Get him to the infirmary. I'll find out what the hell happened."<p>

She shook her head. "Nuh-uh. I am not leaving you."

"Yeah, that may be so, but he doesn't look too good. Even ignoring the disarray the ship is in now, the Drive could break and he might turn out to be the only engineer who knows it well enough to fix it. Unlikely, yes, if the recruitment was done right, but possible nonetheless. And besides, I'm only going to find out what happened. It'll probably be nothing more than a slight maintenance error." I paused, considering. "But, it could also be because we're under attack, and if that turns out to be the case, I'll come and find you."

She gave me a disturbed look. "When did you lose your emotions?"

I raised my eyebrows, then looked over my recent behavior. I sighed and closed my eyes. "Sorry. It's just that I'm trying to be confident enough to keep you going without self-doubt and making sure that we all survive, acting and reacting like a tactician. I know it disturbs you the way that I'm acting like some heartless perfect creature, since it's disturbing me too. I'll try to keep from seeming emotionless for you in the future. But for right now, get him to the infirmary." I gave her a warm smile. "And besides, while I may not have anything bigger than a pistol, I'm pretty good with it, and when I run out of bullets, I can simply charge them when they're not looking."

Concern flashed over her face, so I decided to let her in on a little secret.

"Well, let's just say that in another life in another time, I would've been an amazing thief. When I wanted to sneak out of the house, then no matter how many security measures my family put up, I could always sneak in and out however many times I wanted to with no one the wiser."

We gave each other wry smiles and left for our respective destinations.

When I reached a computer terminal, I turned it on and typed in
Cortana, what happened?

I don't know. One second I was watching you leave the marine's room with her, the next, the Gravity Drive is gone, and so are all communications and sensors.

I raised my eyebrows. **So, in other words, you can't see or hear me or anyone else, and you can't call for help in any way except through the terminals?**

Sort of. Many of the other terminals don't work, and the main computer core is in disarray. I've been distracted by trying to get them back in order.

I nodded. **So I see. Does the straight up PA system work? Not the intercom, but the 'Address everyone at once without the ability of gaining a verbal response' system.**

No. I tried after the explosion. No inter- or intra-ship communications or internal/external sensors.

I made a face. **That's gotta suck.** I paused for half a second, then continued typing. **I'm gonna go and check out the various corridors. Just in case this is a raid of some sort. (Probably is.) I'll check in through other computers later.**

I stood, pulled out my pistol and left the terminal, getting my sneak on. I snickered to myself quietly at that thought, then hid behind a corner, peeked, and then moved like a thief in the night to the next corner. *Snicker*

A few turns later, I began hearing loud voices.

Once I got close enough to be only around a corner, I cautiously poked my head around the corner. From the way they were bunched around a group of captured soldiers and engineers, I'd say they were mercenaries. Untrained civilians probably. I know the type. I iwas/i one of them once.

A thought struck me and a grin began to spread across my face. Maybe I should show them why I was feared throughout the world before I gained a fiancée. I holstered my pistol and pounced.

The first one went down after I punched the back of his head. The second one didn't notice the magazine I threw at his head until it hit. The third one took a spinning kick to the face while trying to raise his weapon to shoot me. The fourth and final was just staring at me stupidly, so I just shook my head at him and went over to punch him. He collapsed bonelessly.

That's 4 mercenaries in less than a minute without making a sound. Simple.

I stooped down and picked through the mercenaries' pockets, looking for weapons and ammo like a carrion feeder looking for the best meats. Once that was done, I looked around for a good place to stash them, noticing a maintenance hatch. I piled the bodies on my shoulders in a fireman's hold, two per shoulder, and motioned for the hostages to follow. Then I opened the door, traveled inside for a little bit, and dumped the bodies. Nice little hiding spot in my opinion. Then I handed out a few guns to the others there.

"Keep an eye on 'em for me would ya?" I waited for their nods, and then left.

I kept my pistol holstered because I'd picked up something slightly better, for the moment at least. However, I kept it at my back on the strap just in case I wanted to do any more sneak attacks.

Isn't that Rand's hair?

Do it, or don't?

No question: Do it!

I snuck up to her, stood up calmly, and then yelled in her ear "BOO!" as loud as I could.

She jumped and whirled around, ready to kill, and relaxed when she saw who it was. "Jesus Tex! Don't do that to me!"

I gave her an apologetic smile. "Sorry, couldn't help myself." I shrugged. "Besides, now we know exactly what caused the explosion."

"What?"

"Three guesses: hired guns, raiders, or Innies." I paused to think before adding, "Or people from Project Freelancer."

She looked confused. "What do the Insurrectionists have to do with this?"

I unslung my rifle from my back and handed it to her. It was a .308 Caliber Light Machine Gun, also called a "Confetti Maker". While it was a fairly formidable weapon, due to the reason for it's namesake, the ability for it's larger bullets spent at a high rate of fire to rip the enemy into confetti, it wasn't used by the UNSC anymore due to the capability of the MA5 series, or specifically of the MA5D Individual Combat Weapon System, to do the exact same thing with far better accuracy. Since it's a fairly good gun and readily available on the black market for it's numbers and disuse by the military, it counts as a prime weapon for the rebellious factions of humanity.

I watched her puzzle through our current situation quickly and efficiently before giving the gun back to me, and we began to move out. After a few turns, I told her about the little stash of hired guns I put into a maintenance tunnel, and then I asked her what she knew about Project Freelancer.

"Oh, nothing much." She pointed her gun down a hallway and followed my lead on down the main hallway. "They're just some shadowy war project made to help defend Humanity's interests. They were made for the Innies at first, just like the Spartan projects. It's about as much as anyone outside it knows, really. Why do you ask?"

I shrugged as I checked down another hallway before moving on. "Well, that's about as much as almost anyone inside the project knows either. There's all these simulations out there to prepare their main warriors, the Freelancers, for real war, not that it really helps, especially since a number of them ended up as barely anything more than mercenaries contracted by some ghost named The Director acting as spies for him."

Rand stopped. "Wait." I stopped. "How do you know that?"

I shrugged. "To be honest, I'm a reincarnated AI fragment."

"Oh, bullshit." She said.

I shrugged again. "Suit yourself." I aimed my gun and opened fire on the group of hostiles down the hall. All dead, damn. "Course, it's not like I knew about that. Not until I passed out after cryosleep. I was pretty damaged from what happened before that, so that might be why the memories came to mind."

"How do you even do that?"

Once again, I shrugged. "You got me. Let's just focus on the mission for the moment, how 'bout that?" I began walking off.

We fell into a grudging silence and we continued on our self-given mission of finding and subduing every invader on-ship. Sure, most of them got killed, but it was self-defense, automatic reactions.

Until one corner where they got lucky.

Several bullets ran straight through the pathetic armoring of the civilian suit and rammed through several bones on the way out of my body.

I passed out for a few seconds, which was enough for the battle to end and for Rand to get worried and over to my slumped body, snapping her fingers in front of my nose to get my attention. "Hey, hey, come on Tex. Come on, focus on me, okay?"

I tilted my head as I looked up at her. "Why the long face?" I asked weakly before coughing. Yeah, I was delirious. Blood loss obviously.

She looked worried for a moment. Then she said, "Tell me about Freelancer."

My head resumed it's precarious angle, in confusion this time instead of analyzation. "Why?"

She smiled weakly and wryly. "You mean that you think you can just dump this big revelation about one of the biggest secrets of the UNSC military projects on me and expect to get away without telling me more? Nuh-uh, you don't get any wiggle room, okay?"

I looked right into her eyes, and sighed at the determination in them. Well, she's right. I brought this on myself. "Alright, but I'm only bringing up the basics because there's a bit too much to say all right now. And I don't exactly trust the others around here to not listen in.

"In Project Freelancer, they were setting out to make super-soldiers, just like the Spartan projects. But, they were making them like, super-spies instead of super-soldiers, so that they could do anything, not just kill things. One of their main goals was to experiment with the usefulness of Smart AI's in combat situations. However, rumor had it that they could only get the one. So they did the best they could. If you had checked the logs, you'd notice that there are 'logging errors', saying that multiple different people used an AI at the same exact time. I'll let you come to your own conclusions on that."

"Why not tell me?"

"Because at the moment, I don't know." It was getting hard to breathe. And is it just me, or am I getting a little loopy?

"It's not just you." Rand told me.

Oh, I didn't realize I said that out loud.

"Well ya did." She smiled at me. "But for now, let's focus on Freelancer, okay?"

I nodded. Where was I again? Oh yeah. The AI. "Now, as to how they would test them, they had this secondary set of soldiers. They had two 'armies', named according to their armor colors as provided. Red, and Blue. Think a First Person Shooter multiplayer team game or something like that." I looked into her eyes. "Got that image in your head?"

She nodded. "You know, I'm kinda surprised you're so lucid."

My eyebrows came together. "I'm not Lucy, I'm Shogo." Something touched my breast and I whacked at it, or at least tried to. "Shoo, I don't like being touched there unless it's by Kimmie or my doc." I paused to think. "Which are typically the same person."

"Tex, you're in the infirmary." Rand said gently. "So you're being touched by a doc."

I turned my head back from it's lack of focus back to her. "I don't care. He touches me again, he's losin' his bits!"

She was struggling to keep from smiling, even through the tenseness of the situation. "He's a 'she'."

I blinked. I blinked again. I blinked a third time as the information made it through the CO2 fog in my brain. "Oh." I blinked a fourth time for good measure.

"You mentioned the super-soldiers of Project Freelancer." She said. "What were they called?"

I blinked at her, as if it was the stupidest question I'd heard all day. "Freelancers of course. And when they weren't on missions for the Director, they were being sent to check out a live simulation where they'd try to kill people from either army. Sometimes both sides. One notable example, Maine, he went after a few 'simulation troopers' once. An idiot actually got off a lucky shot and shot straight through his trachea. No more voice box for him. He was actually a bit of a nice conversationalist to his friends before that."

"And where did you fit in?"

"Officially or unofficially?" I asked sarcastically. "Lie is, I was a new recruit who somehow had that magic 'stuff' that qualified me for the reserved codename of Texas. I was the best damn recruit the program had ever seen. Bu' there was so'm' wrong wit' me." Oh boy, I'm starting to pass out. I leaned in close to her to finish off my words. "I weren't nottin' budda two-bit sparkle queen!" I finished with a grin before my eyes rolled back in my head, leaving me unconscious as the docs finished whatever they did to me and Rand nervously awaited my revival.

* * *

><p>"It's not the size of the switch, it's how you flip it." She said it with a smile in her voice.<p>

"Did you fall on your head when you were a child?" I asked. "I mean, I just gotta know."

She shook her head. "Sorry ghost-boy, but I'm completely concussion-less. Which is kinda sad because if I weren't, I'd probably have been more able to survive." She looked around. "So, Valhalla. It's kinda depressing right now."

"That's because the only people here are you, me, and the bodies of Private Donut, Lopez, and that body that belonged to Beta before she was erased."

"Why don't you call her Tex?" She asked, genuinely curious.

"Are you fucking kidding me?! Beta was not Tex. She was this... echo, this- this fake! She was this pitiful part of me that was doomed to fail every time she ever tried to succeed, even after she was killed that first time in the Gulch. I'm glad Beta is erased."

She nodded. "So that she doesn't have to deal with that hell."

"Exactly. And plus, Tex is alive."

She turned her head to me. "She's alive?"

I nodded my hologram head. "Just like me... sort of. She has a real body to inhabit. Her stasis pod was picked up by the UNSC and opened by an idiot, which allowed her to wake up in her own body. She's currently gallivanting around a bit in this ship with the Smart AI Cortana."

"And Cortana is that AI that likes the Master Chief, right?" She asked.

I nodded. "Yep. She's in good hands. That means that by the time she's in trouble, she'll be ready for it. Trained." I paused. "Of course, that doesn't mean that she knows everything. I mean, she only remembers what she was, before Beta was revealed to be an AI, and her biology wouldn't be very conducive to her figuring out that she can do things that I can do too."

"Since she's biological, rather than cybernetic." She said, understanding.

"Exactly." I paused as I looked around, watching her move through the mostly empty base. "Look, Francine-"

She cut me off. "I already told you, call me Frank."

"Alright alright already. Fine, Frank. Look, what exactly are we doing, anyway? I mean, we aren't helping her, and we aren't really doing anything except for moving around in stolen military property and collecting a few things that technically belong to Project Freelancer."

"Well, right now, we're being glad of the small temporal cracks and hoping that they don't get bigger because we're taking advantage of them. And we already know that this is going to happen."

"Because of that little fragment of video that's causing a pre-destination paradox." I said uncertainly, parroting her words back to her.

"Yep. Besides, she deserves this. She deserves a little rest and a bit of nostalgia, even if she might not remember, or it might bring up bad memories. Aha!" She picked up a small box, containing a back-up of a certain robot, no doubt.

"You know, it's a little scary, seeing you smart like this." I observed.

She pulled off her helmet to smirk at me. "Would you rather me be a complete and utter gutter-mind of an idiotic gay man?"

I shook my head vehemently. "No thanks. I had enough of Franklin Delano Donut back in the Gulch, thank you very much."

"Well then, Mr. Leonard Church, shall we?" I nodded as she put her helmet back on, smirk still solidly in place. Then we went out to the shipwreck.

There was one last thing we needed to do in this particular piece of time-space.

10. The End? Or is it the Actual Beginning?

When I woke up, I saw white.

Not surprising when you realize that for the millionth time (at least), you've ended up in the hospital or whatever counts as such wherever you happen to be.

"Oh good, I was getting worried."

I turned my head and there in front of me was Rand. "You look like shit." I said honestly. You'd think she hadn't gotten sleep in 3 days for... Oh.

She snorted. "Yeah, well, you look worse."

I raised a challenging eyebrow. Sure I felt weaker than a newborn baby, but I had a reputation to maintain! Or build. Whatever.

Part one of that consisted of me convincing myself that I had no one to measure up to in becoming a badass.

...

Still haven't gotten that part down.

But maybe the first steps can be put into place right now. Perhaps...

"Come here."

Rand nodded and leaned over. When she was close enough, I gave her the Gibbs Special.

A hard slap to the back of the head.

Rand jerked back. "What the hell was that for?!"

"For not getting enough sleep!" I wagged a finger at her for emphasis and tried to keep a smile off my face for a moment. Then I lunged forward and let the smile come out as bright as possible as I hugged her close. "And this is for staying around to give me a friendly face."

After an awkward moment or two, she began to hug me back.

A nurse cleared her throat and we split apart. Touching moment over, oh well.

Rand mumbled an apology before the nurse started to tear into her for keeping the nice woman (AKA, me) awake when she obviously needs her rest. I just gave her my best yell (really pitiful at the moment) to just shut up and leave her be since she's just as bad off as I am. That little interaction exhausted me and before we knew it, Rand was asleep on my snoring chest.

Hey! Mind outta the gutter!

* * *

><p>"So, Cortanna..." The captain began. "Is there any reason I should be getting alerted to a security breach at 2 in the morning because you were looking for an AI designated ghost?"<p>

The eyebrows on Cortana's hologram went straight to her hairline. "There was an alert?"

Parker nodded. "At 2 in the morning, which woke me up. Anything you wish to explain to me?" He prodded.

With a slightly guilty look on her face, probably from waking him up like that, she stated, "When I was watching Shego in the gunnery range, I was noticed by another program. I asked it's name and it gave me the moniker 'Ghost', before adding that it was everywhere, and nowhere. From there we had a very vague and disconcerting conversation. In all the hubub, I forgot about it entirely until afterwards."

* * *

><p>"Hey Frank?"<p>

She paused where she was to look at him, a couple of wires in her hands leading to the wiring next to the cockpit of a slightly odd Pelican. "Yeah Ghost?"

"Sorry about snappin' atcha earlier."

She shrugged. "No problem."

That, apparently, was not good enough for Ghost. "Well, it's just that, I didn't give you a good enough explanation. I'm not taking back my statement saying that I'm glad that she's dead. After all, as Beta, she couldn't really do much but fail. And it was even worse for the version of her that came out of the Epsilon unit, and even more so for all the copies that the Director made. I love her, and there's no way that I could ever wish that sort of pain onto

her."

Frank nodded somberly. "Thanks for telling me. I understand." She leaned back over, which would've been really sexy if she'd been wearing anything more revealing than a full suit of armor like the MJOLNIR Mark VII that Spartan-117, AKA The Master Chief, wore almost constantly. She messed around with the wires for a bit longer before finally yanking something out. Then she stood up, put the thing she'd yanked into a pouch, and turned to Ghost with one question on her lips.

"Where to next?"

* * *

><p>"Of course, Ghost never got to answer because right about then the entire universe died. Or, in the words of 'Washing-Tub' from Caboose's head, 'The whole world exploded AND everyone died AND the whole world exploded!' "<p>

"Hey!"

In the room, all the children looked away from where their attention was raptly kept to the doorway where a tall woman in full military gear with butt-length black hair stood with a slightly reprimanding look on her face while looking at the current storyteller. She continued to speak. "The actual line is," At this point her face became extremely expressive to over-excentuate the emotions (just like in Caboose's head) while she tried to keep from busting out in a grin. " 'If you tell anyone I told you, the whole world would explode _AND_ everyone would die _AND_ the whole word could explode!' "

After a few seconds, the new arrival gave up and grinned at her friend. "So, what lies have you been telling them Gary?" She asked of the retired ONI operative.

The man with the solidly steel-colored hair smiled at her in a different way than he had been to the children. "Oh, just the story of how we met."

She turned to the children and spoke in a lowered, conspiratorial voice, "It's all lies! Believe nothing he says!"

That got her a lot of giggles from the kids, which was the point. So, they began to tell her the story the older man had been telling them.

After listening to the questions of the children for a few moments, she looked at the man questioningly. He picked up on her unasked question and answered. "Well, to be perfectly honest" he ignored her snort here. "I was just setting it up to make sure that you would actually tell your own story yourself."

"Well, let's be honest here, it's just a piece of history. All in the past. So why should I bother telling everybody about it?"

"Because of all the stories I know of that involve monsters and heros, yours is one that truly needs telling." He says with his most honest face.

She stares at him, studies him, and finally decides that he's not lying or messing with her head. He's really and truly being honest with her when he says that her story needs telling.

A new voice decides to chip in. "Besides it's not like you've got anything too traumatizing for them."

They all look at the newest arrival, a slightly shorter woman with shoulder-length (and fairly stylish) red hair who was smiling amusedly at everything that she saw in the room.

The woman with the black hair looked from the man to the other woman to the children and back. Then, after another few moments, she slumped a little and sighed in defeat. "Fine. I'll do it. But it's not the best story, I'll warn ya."

The children's smiles brightened the room by a few hundred megawatts as they hunkered down for the story.

"Well, it started like this."

* * *

><p>AN: Sorry about the long wait, and for the ending, but I reread the story after getting a bad review about it, and I thought about it. It's not really up to the sort of standards that I really have as a reader, which means that even if I manage to save it (not entirely likely with the way that I've set it up so far), then people won't really get the full enjoyment out of it. It's got the potential to be an amazing story, and I'm not going to waste it, so I'm going to start over, and hopefully the rewrite will be better than this was.

Still, I have a good start and a nice basis to begin, so it's not a hopeless endeavor. I just hope that you guys will like the rewrite just as much as a few of you have liked the original.

Well, I'm off to start the new one.

End
file.